



HANUKKAH HAIKU

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The traditional Japanese poetic form, coupled with stepped illustrations, make a lovely way to celebrate the Festival of Lights.

JEWISH CONCEPTS

Hanukkah, an eight-day-long Festival of Lights, arrives at the darkest time of year. The holiday reminds us of a time during the second century BCE when Judea (now Israel) was under Greek-Syrian rule. The Jewish people were being pressured to assimilate to Greek culture and religion. A small army known as the Maccabees rose against the much larger Syrian army, battling in the name of religious and cultural freedom. Against all odds, the Maccabees won and reclaimed the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. To rededicate the Temple, the Jews needed to light the menorah, the seven-branched ritual candelabrum – but they only had enough oil to last for one day. Miraculously, that small amount of oil lasted eight days, long enough for them to procure more oil for the menorah.

We celebrate this miracle today by lighting candles in a *hanukkiah*, a Hanukkah menorah, for eight nights, and by eating foods fried in generous amounts of oil. It is also traditional to play *dreidel*, a game of chance played with a spinning top whose Hebrew letters are meant to remind us that “A Great Miracle Happened There.” Hanukkah may be the Festival of Lights, but it is also a holiday of miracles – whether big, such as the one that took place long ago, or small, such as the joy of togetherness with one’s family.

USING THIS BOOK AT HOME

Reading with little ones is extra fun when it’s interactive. Here are suggestions for sharing *Hanukkah Haiku* with your little one:

- Count items on the various pages, such as the latkes on Hanukkah’s fourth night or the increasing number of candles in the menorah
- Create a Hanukkah story about the book’s family, or have a conversation with one of the book’s characters
- Discuss ways in which Hanukkah in this book is similar to or different from your family’s celebration
- Together, choose a Hanukkah activity pictured in the book that your family might enjoy adopting as your own

The text and illustrations of *Hanukkah Haiku* model enjoying the holiday together as a family. Hanukkah is also a lot of fun as a community holiday. Consider inviting others to share Hanukkah with you – ask friends and acquaintances to join you for candle lighting, games, and dessert. If your community has a candle lighting event, invite friends to meet you there. Or create your own Hanukkah haiku! Your poem could relate something unique about your own family’s celebration.